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10 January 1980

Joseph Onek  
Deputy Counsel to the President  
The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20013

Dear Mr. Onek:

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Within the last several days I have been receiving a considerable amount of mail from Afghan refugee groups in Pakistan. I enclose copy of one of these for your information. Current estimation by individuals who are familiar with the Afghan refugee situation in both Iran and Pakistan project that within a very short period the total of Afghan refugees will approach or exceed one million. I think these projections are realistic given the intensity of the situation as it is now in Afghanistan and the intolerance Afghans have to living under a Communist system. If these projections are born out, we will obviously witness a situation that will approach the magnitude of refugee problems in South East Asia. Already the situation along the Pakistani/Afghan border is grave. It certainly doesn't appear that the Pakistani economy will be able to mitigate against the needs of the Afghan refugees to the extent required.

Within the last several months I joined the former Ambassadors to Afghanistan and other concerned citizens to form the Afghanistan Relief Committee whose sole purpose is to raise funds for the Afghan refugees to be distributed to acceptable and recognized international organizations. Our campaign is just starting to gather momentum and we intend to press on in vigorous fashion.

It has occured to me, as I mentioned to you by telephone, that an active relief campaign by the Carter Administration should be undertaken that would send the necessary distribution to the Afghan refugees in the Northwest Frontier and Baluchistan Provinces. It is important to note here that wheat provides the main stable of the Afghan idet, so that this should not create for anyone sensitivity to cultural dietary realities.

It seems to me also that sending some of this wheat to the refugees would be a good answer to those critics of the Administration's decision on the grain embargo. And, quite frankly, the availability of food for the refugees would certainly have a positive impact on the activities of the rebels in Afghanistan.

I hope that you might press this issue with Mr. Cutler and the President at your earliest convenience. The sooner we act on this particular matter, the more assured we may be of alleviating the inevitable refugee calamity rather than reacting to it.

Again, I appreciate the time you have taken to talk with me concerning these matters. I look forward to being in touch with you in the future, as may be appropriate.

Thomas E. Gouttierre

Enclosure

